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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ADDIS ABABA 000304

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TAGS: PREL PBTS MOPS KPKO ET ER

SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA/ERITREA: UNMEE DECIDES TO WITHDRAW FROM
ERITREA

REF: 08 ADDIS ABABA 117

Classified By: Ambassador Donald Yamamoto for Reasons: 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (C/NF) SUMMARY. On February 6, Acting Special Representative of the Secretary General Azouz Ennifar ordered the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) to execute a complete withdrawal from Eritrea after being unable to obtain fuel from the Eritrean government since December 1.

Ethiopian Prime Minister has agreed to allow the force to withdraw into Ethiopia but he will not allow them to stay in Ethiopia for more than a few weeks after the redeployment is complete. Meles expects that UNMEE will be changed into an observer mission when the mandate comes up for renewal in July 2008. UNMEE's operations order (OPORD) outlines a timeline of three weeks to move the entire force with its equipment into Ethiopia. However, Ennifar is not certain Eritrean President Isaias will allow the force to withdraw with its equipment and vehicles. END SUMMARY.

ENNIFAR ORDERS FULL WITHDRAWAL

¶2. (C/NF) On February 6, Ennifar ordered UNMEE to withdraw completely from Eritrea after being unable to obtain fuel for the mission from the Eritrean government since December 1 (REF). UNMEE/Eritrea no longer has sufficient fuel to operate and is nearly down to its strategic reserves which they can only use for evacuation of the force. Publicly, the UN is calling the move temporary, but few observers believe UNMEE will return to Eritrea. Ennifar told Ambassador on February 6 that he expected the advance elements from UNMEE to begin arriving in Ethiopia within 48 hours.

ETHIOPIA INSISTS WITHDRAWING FORCES CANNOT STAY

¶3. (C/NF) According to UNMEE officers, Ennifar's plan was to relocate to Ethiopia, establish new team sites, and monitor the border with the full force from the Ethiopian side, but the Ethiopian government will only allow the withdrawing forces to stay in Ethiopia temporarily. The Ethiopian Ministry of Defense instructed UNMEE to move the additional forces to existing UNMEE sites, and is refusing to

allow UNMEE to establish new camps. UNMEE officers note that the current UNMEE infrastructure in Ethiopia is not prepared to accept hundreds of additional troops and staff.

¶4. (C/NF) Prime Minister Meles told the Ambassador on February 6 that he would allow UNMEE to evacuate into Ethiopia, but that the forces could not reestablish themselves in Ethiopia. Meles expects that UNMEE will be changed to an observer mission when the mandate comes up for renewal in July 2008. In the meantime, Meles said the additional UNMEE troops must leave Ethiopia within a few weeks after the redeployment is complete, but the UNMEE forces currently deployed in Ethiopia will remain as they are until UNMEE's mandate is changed.

UNMEE NEEDS THREE WEEKS TO RELOCATE

¶5. (C/NF) UNMEE's operations order (OPORD) lays out a timeline of three weeks to redeploy the entire force with its equipment into Ethiopia. It provides one week for the advance elements to enter Ethiopia and two weeks for the main force to follow on. According to the timeline, D Day-7 is the decision to relocate with D-6 to D-1 allotted for the movement of the advance parties. D-Day to D 15 is allotted for the movement of the main force. According to UNMEE officers, Ennifar does not yet have permission from the Ethiopian MOD to commence the movement of the main body and D-Day has not yet been set although advance party movement is to begin February 8.

¶6. (C/NF) UNMEE's OPORD outlines a three-phased

ADDIS ABAB 00000304 002 OF 002

redeployment: "Phase I. Move of Advance Parties from complete compliment of UNMEE, including all civilians and military personnel along with the associated assets/equipment considered essential for setting up the same facility at an alternate location in Ethiopia or to the designated staging area. The complete move of Advance Parties will be carried out by air from Asmara to Addis Ababa and by road from Eritrea to the locations in the Adjacent Area on the Ethiopian side..."

¶7. (C/NF) "Phase II. Move of main body of the UNMEE by air from Asmara to Addis Ababa and by road through the designated crossing points. The Main Body will comprise of all personnel of UNMEE and the associated assets/equipment, except those personnel and assets/equipment which will continue to stay behind as Rear Party for completion of winding up at the respective locations."

¶8. (C/NF) "Phase III. Rear Party of UNMEE along with the assets/equipment left behind will move to the new location by air/road after completing the task of winding up and obtaining the requisite clearances from the local authorities. After the move of the Rear Party, there will be no personnel, equipment/assets or liabilities of UNMEE Force HQ on the Eritrean side of the Mission."

UNCERTAIN IF UNMEE CAN LEAVE WITH EQUIPMENT

¶9. (C/NF) Ennifar told the Ambassador on February 6 that he is not certain President Isaias will allow UNMEE to enter Ethiopia with any equipment or vehicles. Ennifar believes UNMEE officers may have to walk into Ethiopia, but he will not know for sure until the redeployment begins and the first troops reach the border. Until then UNMEE is proceeding under the assumption that they will be allowed to transfer all their equipment and assets to Ethiopia.

COMMENT

¶10. (C/NF) Meles appears to see little utility in UNMEE once it departs Eritrea although he is willing to accept a small observer mission focused on monitoring Eritrean military activity. It is clear that the Ethiopian military does not want to see additional military observation sites established in Ethiopia as they probably do not want additional observation of their own military activity. END COMMENT.

YAMAMOTO